Babette Puetz, "Entry on: Nevermoor: The Trials of Morrigan Crow by Jessica Townsend", peer-reviewed by Elizabeth Hale and Lisa Maurice. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/708. Entry version as of November 05, 2026.

Jessica Townsend

Nevermoor: The Trials of Morrigan Crow

New Zealand (2017)

TAGS: Prophecy





We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	Nevermoor: The Trials of Morrigan Crow
Country of the First Edition	New Zealand
Country/countries of popularity	New Zealand
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2017
First Edition Details	Jessica Townsend, *Nevermoor: The Trials of Morrigan Crow.* Hachette, 2017.
ISBN	9780734418074 (pbk.) / 0734418078
Awards	The novel is a New York Times bestseller and the largest-selling Australian children's debut since records began. It has won the 2018 ABIA for Book of the Year, Book of the Year for Younger Readers, the Matt Richell Award for New Writer of the Year, the 2018 Indie Book Awards Book of the Year and Children's Category, the 2017 Aurealis Award for Best Children's Fiction, the 2018 Waterstones Children's Book Prize for Younger Fiction, the Dymocks and QDB Children's Book of the Year 2018 and was named a CBCA notable book.
Genre	Fantasy fiction, Novels
Target Audience	Crossover (Children, Young Adults)
Author of the Entry	Babette Puetz, Victoria University of Wellington, babette.puetz@vuw.ac.nz

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au Lisa Maurice, Bar-Ilan University, lisa.maurice@biu.ac.il

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Creators



Jessica Townsend , b. 1985
(Author)

Jessica Townsend grew up on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland, Australia. Now she lives sometimes there, sometimes in London. She used to be a copywriter and the editor of *Crikey!*, a children's wildlife magazine for Steve Irwin's Australia Zoo. *Nevermoor: The Trials of Morrigan Crow* (2017) was her first novel and was followed a year later by the second book in the series: *Wundersmith: The Calling of Morrigan Crow* (2018). Jessica Townsend has a strong interest in ancient cities.

Sources:

Profile at hachette.com.au (accessed: March 19, 2019)

Profile at thebentagency.com (accessed: March 19, 2019)

Bio at books.google.co.nz (accessed: March 19, 2019)

Interview at nzherald.co.nz (accessed: March 19, 2019)

Bio prepared by Babette Puetz, Victoria University of Wellington,
babette.puetz@vuw.ac.nz

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Additional information

Adaptations

Oscar-nominated writer Drew Goddard will write the script and produce the film of *Nevermoor: The Trials of Morrigan Crow*, probably the first in a series of films.

See:

imdb.com (accessed: March 19, 2019)

deadline.com (accessed: March 19, 2019)

slashfilm.com (accessed: March 19, 2019)

Translation

German: *Nevermoor: Fluch und Wunder,* transl. Franca Fritz and Heinrich Koop, illustr. Eva Schöffmann-Davidov, Hamburg: Dressler Verlag, 2018.

French: *Nevermoor: Les défis de Morrigane Crow*, transl. Juliette Lê and Isabelle Chapman, Paris: PKJ Univers Poche, 2018.

Spanish: *Nevermoor. Las pruebas de Morrigan Crow*, trans. Elda García-Posada Gómez, Barcelona: Destino, 2018.

Summary

Nevermoor is a novel set in an elaborate magical world, filled with people with super-natural abilities and magical creatures. These elements and the fact that the protagonist has to fulfil a series of quests, remind the reader of stories from Classical myth, and several figures have Classical names (Jupiter, Fenestra). The novel is a fantasy pastiche drawing on many inspirations, ancient and modern (e.g. C.S. Lewis, J.K. Rowling, L. Frank Baum, P. Pullman). Morrigan Crow is a cursed child and destined to die on her 11th birthday, just when a mysterious stranger, called Jupiter North, offers to be her patron and whisks her away to a magical city called Nevermoor. Here, Morrigan starts a new life in Jupiter's Hotel Deucalion and makes friends. However, she needs to compete against hundreds of other children in a series of four very difficult and dangerous trials for one of only a few places in the city's most prestigious organisation, the Wundrous Society. The trials test her honesty, determination and bravery. The

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

pressure to succeed is high, as only by joining the Wundrous Society, will Morrigan be allowed to stay in Nevermore and escape the death of her curse. All the other children have special talents, but Morrigan is convinced she has none and is puzzled why she has been chosen by Jupiter. In the final trial she finds out that her special talent is that she is a Wundersmith, a person who possesses strong magical powers which she can use to change the world. Wundersmiths have, however, an evil reputation, but despite of the possible danger that Morrigan's powers might pose to Nevermoor, Jupiter convinces the Wundrous Society to accept Morrigan.

Analysis

Nevermoor is part of the current trend of fantastical children's novels about unloved children discovering their magical talents and has been compared to *Harry Potter* in its creation of an entire, very detailed magical world. Classical references fit and add to this concept, placing the story into a wider mythological framework. The use of allusions appeals to clever or widely-read children or children interested in language. It has been very well received world-wide.

The most striking Classical references in this novel are character names. Jupiter North is an energetic, eccentric character, but also resembles Jupiter/Zeus from myth in that he is Morrigan's protector who can be quite intimidating if anybody threatens Morrigan. Towards Morrigan, he is very caring and fatherly, similar to Jupiter/Zeus is in myth towards his daughter Athena. Jupiter North's special talent ("knack") is a particularly powerful one: He is a witness who can see things about other people's feelings and personalities without them knowing. This reminds one of the mythological Jupiter's/Zeus' particularly strong divine powers. In his humourous depiction, Jupiter North resembles Greek Zeus more than Roman Jupiter, which seems to be the reason why the author uses the Greek, rather than the Roman name.

Jupiter North's middle name is Amantius, related to Latin *amans, amantis* ("loving"), reflecting his very close and warm relationship with both Morrigan and his young nephew, as well as his general good naturedness and popularity.

While in ancient myth, usually male heroes have divine patrons, here it is a female hero who has a patron with supernatural powers and the name of a Roman god. The reason for this could be to create the

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

contrast between Morrigan's fiercely protective and fun-loving patron Jupiter and her uncaring, cold, humourless biological father who feels annoyed and embarrassed by his cured daughter. Morrigan's father has the first name Corvus, which is the Latin for "crow". Crow is also the family's last name, the crow being a symbol for loss and ill-omen, fitting Morrigan's situation as a cursed child.

Morrigan is a name from Irish mythology, referring to a goddess associated with death, fate and war. The goddess is a shape-shifter and appears as a crow, hence Townsend's Morrigan's last name Crow. Seeing her before a battle was regarded a bad omen, just like Townsend's Morrigan's mere presence is blamed for all sorts of misadventures in her childhood.

Jupiter owns a hotel of the name Deucalion. In classical mythology, Deucalion and his wife Pyrrha are the only survivors of a terrible flood which Zeus brings upon Earth. Deucalion was warned of Zeus' plan by his father, the trickster Prometheus, and builds a chest in which he and Pyrrha float until the waters recede. An oracle tells them to repopulate the earth by throwing the bones of their mother over their shoulder, which they rightly understand to be rocks which then turn into people. This is a story of survival against the odds and new hope and life, fitting Morrigan's situation who finds refuge and a new, happier and safer life at the Hotel Deucalion.

In the hotel lives and works a giant cat (Magnificat) called Fenestra. A Magnificat, outside of this story, is a canticle (the Song of Mary) used in the liturgy of the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches as part of the story of a conversation of Mary and Elizabeth, but here the term refers to a magnificently large and imperious cat. She might be named Fenestra (Latin for "window") because of her large size which enables her to look through high up windows of the hotel and to always know what is happening.

Jupiter's archanipod is called Octavia because of its eight legs.

In Nevermoor, Morrigan finds a best friend called Hawthorne whose brother is named Homer, presumably in homage to another famous author starting with H.

The novel also deals with other Classical concepts, such as prophecy and curse (the question whether Morrigan will manage to escape her curse runs through the entire novel and is only solved at its very end),

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

ideas of patronage of older, experienced mentors to youngsters with special talents, and the typical mythological story pattern of heroes having to survive a series of quests.

In addition to these Classical elements, *Nevermoor* employs a wide range of allusions to fairy tale motifs and to elements of other contemporary children's fantasy. For example Fenestra resembles Aslan, the flying umbrellas remind one of children being able to fly in such stories as Harry Potter or Peter Pan and the Brolly Rail reminds one of other magical means of transport such as Floopowder or flying broom sticks in Harry Potter.

This novel is of the type: an unwanted child finds a patron in a magical world and realises her special powers. The idea of patronage of heroes goes back to ancient myths (such as those around Chiron) and Morrigan's set of trials remind one of the quests ancient heroes, such as Jason, have to undergo to survive, defeat their deathly enemies and be accepted. However, *Nevermoor* contains only few Classical references, which are mostly confined to character's names and aimed to enhance the general mythical, fantastical context of this novel.

Morrigan's mentor is named Jupiter Amanitus North but is usually just called Jupiter or Uncle Jove, he runs the Hotel Deucalion which becomes Morrigan's new home, in the Hotel lives and works a giant cat called Fenestra, Morrigan's father's name is Corvus and her friend's brother's name is Homer. The novel mentions centaurs in passing and features a walking machine called "archanipod" (which is named Octavia). The novel uses classical allusions as part of a literary pastiche that draws on a range of fantasy styles and tropes.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Prophecy
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Authority Character traits Death Family Friendship Good vs evil Identity Immigration Initiation Integrity Isolation/loneliness Learning Magic powers Success and failure Supernatural creatures (non-classical) Survival Teachers

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Addenda	*Nevermoor: The Trials of Morrigan Crow* was published after an eight-publisher, 24-hour bidding war, resulting in a six-figure deal and much media attention. It has sold in 34 countries. Its film rights have been sold to 20th Century Fox.

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.